



**American Jewish Archives
Judaic Conversion Database
Access Policy**

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) has been designated by the Central Conference of American Rabbis and other Reform agencies as the official repository for certificates of conversion and a variety of cognate materials relating to records of converts and conversions to Judaism that have been performed and sanctioned in the United States and abroad.

Though most of these records are from Reform rabbis the collection contains conversion materials from Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Orthodox rabbis as well. As of April 2018, the AJA preserves more than 45,000 conversion records. These conversion records date to the 1930s though the bulk are predominantly from the 1970s onward. The AJA keeps and preserves these records for the following reasons:

- As a historical record documenting trends and patterns in American Jewish religious life and demography
- As an archival record for the officiating rabbi(s) and congregations.
- As a preservation file to be used by the convert and his/her heirs (upon request)

Due to the personal nature of these documents, as well as of the conversion process itself, the American Jewish Archives considers its conversion records to be a restricted file. Direct access to the AJA's conversion records will be granted only to the convert or his/her heirs (written verification required) and to the officiating rabbi. Access in these instances will be granted only to the specific record(s) of the convert, the officiating rabbi, or their designated representatives.

The American Jewish Archives recognizes that its conversions file may contain valuable material that could be used for any number of historical or research purposes. Broad access to the data for these purposes will be considered upon request. Researchers who prove a specific need and are in possession of bona fide scholarly or research credentials may petition the Executive Director for access to data summarized from the whole of the collection. This data may include, but is not restricted to:

- Summaries of the number of conversions in the collection
- Geographic trends or dispersion of conversion data
- Annual numbers of conversions
- Data on converts – i.e, gender, background, age, etc.

At all times confidentiality of individuals named in the records will be strictly enforced. No one will be granted direct access to any specific or individual data contained in the collection.

All users of the collection must receive the approval of the Executive Director prior to viewing any data. Any and all requests or questions concerning access to or the use of the American Jewish Archives conversions to Judaism collection should be directed to:

Dr. Gary P. Zola
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